

REGION 7 STATE/TRIBAL INPUT TO EPA STRATEGIC PLAN

Goal #1.

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Tribal priorities and concerns are also developed and verified on an ongoing basis. Senior management meets quarterly the ROC, and these meetings are supplemented by monthly conference calls in which all 7 tribes participate. Field visits by regional staff average at least one per month. Planning & priority setting are always part of the visits. In addition, four of the tribes have PPGs and these comprehensive work plan negotiations generate a plethora of information regarding crucial tribal issues.

Finally, on September 20, 2005 Region 7 convened a 90 minute conference call of the Regional Planning Council which included planning representatives of all the states & tribes to discuss specifically this OCFO exercise.

Overarching Concerns About EPA Plan: We began with general comments. IA opened with the comment that the EPA Strategic Plan, 2003-2008, is entirely too long. The others were in agreement that 239 pages is too much. It was proposed that if the current length is required to satisfy GPRA, the OMB and the Congress, then a shorter, more user friendly version might be developed for public consumption and broad management purposes. Most participants felt that the plan was not remotely strategic, but was a five year operating plan.

NE commented that national priorities shouldn't drive regional priorities and cited as an example the absence of blue-green algae (which is a real priority for NE). Another was "small communities." It was observed that the language was present in the plan, but concrete action and projected results were absent. The plan needs to permit the flexible development of local strategies. While they agreed that this is technically possible, the reality seems to be overshadowed by the national emphasis. The general view was that we have what is allegedly a "bottoms up" process but a "top down" product.

MO remarked that the measures were difficult to interpret. Do they represent targets that are aggregated nationally or one target to be met in each state?.

The Tribal rep. remarked that the environmental problems encountered by the tribes were not specifically reflected in the plan. However he said that the National Tribal Council (NTC) had no specific recommendations at the moment. It was merely an observation.

MO said that we desperately need a unified, simple reporting system so that what we're accomplishing gets recorded. The other states and the tribes heartily agreed. This point came up several times in slightly different contexts.

Several states noted that there are too many activity measures (more like an operating plan than a strategic plan). Need to have a few key measures and leave the nitty-gritty to the states. (This relates to the general comment regarding the length of the plan.)

In conclusion, there was a fairly unanimous opinion that the Plan had little relevance for the states & tribes. What counts is the money, and it is difficult to see a clear connection between the plan and the budget. The Agriculture interests in the region also feel that any strategies, but particularly those which feature "Stewardship" (which stresses individual responsibility) demand a greater stress on timely and relevant stakeholder communication regarding regulations and practices.

Specific to Goal 1: MO noted that as a measure, "the number of people breathing clean air" (as a measure) is more a factor of sprawl since air quality is heavily affected by population density. A measure

regarding % or number of people suffering from respiratory illnesses might be more telling. CAFOs and other agriculture issues are left out. KS noted that regional haze is also an ag factor.

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Specific to Goal 2: MO noted that the measures for the sub-objective on water quality standards stood apart from another set of measures dealing with "swimmable." It would seem that one would be contained within the other. IA observed that non-point source needs to be beefed up due to the ag issues and thought we should work on a strategy that creates linkages with the Farm Bill. Agriculture interests in the region also supported this recommendation, particularly as it relates to non-point source issues. Mo noted that water infrastructure issues don't seem to be reflected in the plan proportionate to the

seriousness of the problem. IA noted that a large percentage of their population relies on private wells for drinking water; and 26% of the wells don't meet standards. Tribes also rely heavily on wells for drinking water. Several states voiced a desire to have greater clarity on what is meant by "a watershed approach." The term is used a lot but suffers from a lack of definition. KS observed that determination of which HUCs should be generally used would help. Regional agriculture interests also felt that the plan should more specifically provide for research objectives and strategies that would highlight new technologies that minimize agriculture's impact on the environment. They also felt strongly that the research should cover integrated systems approaches.

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Specific to Goal 3: MO felt there should be more emphasis on federal facilities. KS noted that the new Energy Act contains regulations regarding tanks and thinks our plan should be revised to reflect that. There seems to be some question about the ability of seals on older tanks to handle ethanol. MO felt that in the area of Environmental Emergency Response states were conspicuous by their absence. KS said plan must be revised to deal with decrease in Superfund money.

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Specific to Goal 4: MO believes that Brownfields would be better suited to placement in Goal 3. A couple of states suggested moving P2 activities out of Goal 5 and placed in Goal 4. IA noted that “unsewered” communities received short shrift in the current plan, either in Goal 2 or Goal 4.

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Specific to Goal 5: All states strongly believe that enforcement activities should be removed from Goal 5 and placed in their related programs. However, they believed that the Compliance Assistance activities should remain as a function of “Stewardship” in Goal 5. In this same vein, everyone believed that states and tribes should be more clearly recognized as the operating entities that accomplish most of the work in the plan. They further believe that the overall EPA budget should reflect this.